July 29, 1837.

My dear Marianne

I was grieved indeed to hear of your affliction, and wished that I had been with you, or some one who is better than I am, to share it with you. I doubt whether it is possible to give comfort under these trials of our flesh, but the comfort comes. Nothing that I can say to you will lighten your sense of the suffering, but the reverse. We must bear, and there is no help.

The only alleviation arises out of those very things that make our grief so heavy. The greater the love we bear to those we lose the worse it is, — and the greater the comfort. The more loveable he was, the worse the loss is to you, the more you console yourself with thinking how thoroughly good he was, how intelligent, how liked by all, how loved by those who knew him, how missed as if he were a grown man. And for the best of reasons. His quick intelligence, his courage, and his strong affection made him understand and merit the affection of those around him, — which is all that

we want of the worst - for not that Harold was of a nature to grow selfish or wily, but at all events he was not spoiled by the world, so that one's love for him had no drawback - was strong without detracting circumstances. And these things, which make it so hard to bid him goodbye, supply the consolations. I know what it is. Both how, nearly together - we old enough to know and love better than most in the world; and it is dear love which rest my darling little Anastasia was one of the best and strongest and most single minded natures I ever met. To this day I can hardly speak of her without feeling as I did when I first knew she was dead; and yet I would not for the world be without her. Often when I see her sister, touch the place where she sometime been, next to Heather. She had more force than any of them. She was affectionate and obstinate. Have carried her ayah's hair to put her in confinement, as a means of overmaster; with her arms round my neck & her lips pressed against my cheek with unabated fondness. And I think of that to this day with a rush of aching. And you will recall many such traits, I know, for the two children were not unlike either in their

nature or their fate.

North I could comfort you dear Marianne, but dearest You have brought me much more comfort in life than I have brought you, and you will have to encrease my debt to you, a thousand fold even after I am gone. For in the course of nature I shall leave some one to be comforted whose suffering will be terrible — so terrible, that I dare not hope to bear it instead. Yet it will be at once worse and yet consecrated, by our absolutely unalloyed love that even death itself will not obliterate or diminish. I know that. The reasons that I have for knowing it you may in part guess, but you cannot even imagine the extent and perfection of faith, generosity, tenderness, and every noblesse which makes me love as I do with such a + large a love in return. You have helped us to appreciate & strengthen each other as we do, and I do not know any blessing so great. I believe the knowledge of affection is the greatest blessing in the world, and that death itself does not, or must not end it; and pity more than the bereaved those who do not know how to be bereaved, from not having that of which we should never tell the loss.

I mean to write you a letter of comfort, and I

I do write you a letter of selfish reflection. But I cannot separate my blessings from your life. Among the dearest things I remember of Harold are the evidences of his insight into an affection which made me what I am. The same thing that made you so fond of him made you both decide that I wanted it. And if you are debarred from meeting him in this world, you still belong to those that he really belonged to through his insight and eager affection. So that I do not feel ashamed of writing about her when I ever to write about him, and you are the last woman to think I share your preference because I would spare you for helping to bear mine, — whichever it falls upon.

And whichever it falls upon it will be borne resignedly through the unbroken tenderness which makes life so dear. For death is only a short mystery, separating life that we know from life unknown. The future cannot be wholly alien to the present. We know only enough to know that death itself, as we can understand it, does not exist at all in the creation. Life means, what we are conscious of — we know all that we know through by and in life, — of death nothing save that it is not. We must respect ourselves — but do we not learn that we have nothing to fear, everything to hope, from the power that has made us known each other, dear to each other, and place our lives in each other's hands? I am

Sure you would not cancel the memory that you preserve to the suit of the grief you feel, nor can you extinguish the inborn conviction that time and change are ideas belonging to our mortal life in this world, but ideas of which our deepest convictions and consciousness are independent. She and I often say that between whatever the past cannot be taken from us, and you must feel so too. We must bear the pain, but if we live for others as well as ourselves, we feel that life gives us a nobler boon even than change can take away; and those who have drawn forth our affections remain with us and help us through all troubles and bereavements. You are a better & nobler woman for having had to mourn a boy, and we love you better for it.

I must go back to work. When you have a thought to spare I always like to have a word from my friends through Mark and them; but I shall hope before long to see you back; and tell them good bye.

Your Chort.

July 29. ~~1857~~ 1857 Copy

My dear Marianne

I was grieved indeed to hear of your affliction, & wished that I had been with you, or some one who is better than I am, to share it with you. I doubt whether it is possible to give comfort under these trials from flesh, but the comfort comes. Nothing that I can say to you will lighten your sense of the suffering, but the severe. We must bear and there is no help. The only alleviation comes out of those very things that make our grief so heavy. The greater the love we bear to those we lose the worse it is, - & the greater the comfort. The more lovable he was, the worse the loss to you, the more you console yourself with thinking how thoroughly good he was, how intelligent & how liked by all, how loved by those who knew him, how missed as if he were a grown man. And for the best reasons. His quick intelligence, his courage, his strong affection made

him understand & meet the affection of those around him - which is all that we want. Ellie wisest. I do not think Harold was by nature to know selfish or wily, but at all events he was not spoiled by the world, so that one's love for him had no drawback - was strong without detracting circumstances. And these things, which make it so hard when God lays, supply the consolations. I know what it is. I lost two, nearly together - one old enough to know and love better than most in the world; and it is dear to me to think that my darling little Anastasia was one of the best & strongest and most single minded natures I ever met. To this day I can hardly speak of her without feeling as I did when I first knew that was dead; and yet I would not for the world be without her. Often when I see her sisters, I recall the place where she would have been, next to Walter. She had more force than any of them. She was affectionate and obstinate. I have carried her up stairs & put her in confinement, as a means of coercing her; with her arms round my neck and her lips pressed against my cheek with unabated tenderness. And I think of that to this day with

cause I doting. And you will recall many such texts, I know, for the two children were not unlike either in their nature or their fate.

I wish I could comfort you dear Marianne, but I cannot. You have brought me much more comfort in life than I have brought you, & you will have to increase my debt to you, perhaps even after I am gone. For in the course of time I shall leave some one to be comforted whose suffering will be terrible — so terrible, that I almost hope to hear it instead. Yet it will be at once worse & yet consecrated, by an absolutely unalloyed love that even death itself will not obliterate or diminish. I know that. The reasons that I have for knowing it you may in part guess, but you cannot even imagine the perfect and perfection of faith, generosity, tenderness, and every nobleness which makes me love as I do. You have helped us to opportunities of knowing each other as we do, and I do not know any blessing so great. I believe the knowledge of affection is the greatest blessing in the world, and that death itself does not, cannot end it; and I pity more than the bereaved those who do not know how to be bereaved, from not knowing that foolish we should mourn the loss.

I was to write you a letter of comfort, and I do write you a letter of selfish reflection. But I cannot separate my blessings from your life. Among the dearest things I remember of Harold are the evidences of his insight into an affection which made me what I am. The same thing that made you so fond of him made you help those that wanted it. And if you are debarred from meeting him in this world, you still belong to those that he really belonged to through his insight and eager affection. So that I do not feel ashamed of writing about her when I was to write about him, and you are the last woman to think I shall ease your grief less because I count upon you for helping to bear mine, — whichever it falls upon. And whichever it falls upon it will be borne resignedly through the unbroken tenderness which makes life so dear. For death itself is only a short mystery, separating life that we know from the unknown. The future cannot be wholly alien to the present. We know only enough to know that death itself, as we once understood it, does not exist at all in the creation. Life means what we are conscious of — we

know all that we know through
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ourselves - but do we not learn that
we have nothing to fear, everything
to hope, from the Power that has
made us know each other, cling
to each other, and place our
lives in each other's hands? I am
sure you would not cancel the
memory that you possess to be
rid of the grief you feel, nor
can you extinguish the inborn
conviction that time and change
are ideas belonging to our ~~realms~~
narrow life; ~~this~~ world, but
ideas of which our strongest con-
victions and consciousness are
independent. She and I often
say that happen what may the
past cannot be taken from us,
and you must feel so too. We
must bear the pain, but if
we live for others as well as
ourselves, we feel that life gives
us a million times more
than change can take away;
and those who have drawn
forth our affections remain
with us and help us through

all troubles and bereavements.
You are a better woman
for having had so sweet
a boy, and we love you
better for it.

I must go back to work.
When you have a thought
to spare I always like to have
a word from my friends
though I think and think;
but I shall hope before
long to see you back; and
till then good bye

Your Aunt.